DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 315 117 JC 900 101

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TITLE A New Frontier in Education: A Concept Paper.
INSTITUTION Miami-Dade Community Coll., FL. Homestead Campus.
PUB DATE Apr 89
NOTE 18p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Campus Planning; College Curriculum; *College Planning; Community Colleges; *Curriculum Development; Economically Disadvantaged; Educationally Disadvantaged; Program Development; *School Community Relationship; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

This concept paper on plans for a new campus of Miami-Dade Community College in the city of Homestead's downtown redevelopment area discusses the history of the Homestead community, its planned economic growth, the community's educational needs, planning assumptions, and curriculum plans. Introductory material explains that the new campus has potential for contributing to the revival of the downtown community; creating equal access and opportunity for people who may not otherwise aspire to higher education; and integrating a unique campus design into the overall redevelopment of the downtown area. Homestead has a 60% non-Hispanic White, 20.6% African-American, and 19% Hispanic population; 35.96% of the city's residents aged 25 years or older graduated from high school; and the 1980 average median household income was $14,797. An integral part of the campus's service area, the Homestead Air Force Base, has an approximate population of 4,000 military personnel, 10,000 dependents, and 1,100 civilian personnel. Community leadership and joint planning between the college and community are necessary to help the campus serve as a center for educational, cultural, and social events. In addition, programs must be related to individual and community needs; the campus must attract students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, ages, and income groups, and faculty must be screened for their commitment and ability to reflect the community's ethnic diversity and talents. The college plans to offer programs and services in the following areas: (1) academic support; (2) precollegiate skills development; (3) general education development; (4) professional development; (5) technical development; (6) administrative; and (7) learning resources. (WJT)

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A CONCEPT PAPER

Miami-Dade Community College
Homestead Campus

A NEW FRONTIER IN EDUCATION

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April 1989

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INTRODUCTION

The decision to locate a campus of Miami-Dade Community College in the heart of the redevelopment area of the City of Homestead is a decision of historic significance. It provides an opportunity for the College to extend its mission into a new frontier in education. This has the potential for causing a rippling effect both in terms of the regeneration and revival of the downtown community; the creation of equal opportunity and access for many people who would otherwise not aspire to higher education; and the integration of a unique campus design that merges the college's facilities into the overall redevelopment plan of the downtown community.

The merger of the community's rich agricultural tradition and planned urban growth highlights the history of one of Dade County's oldest communities.

THE HISTORY

The history of the Homestead Community has been influenced by its strategic location between an expanding Miami-Dade metropolis to the North and the Florida Keys to the South.

Throughout its 75-year history, the Homestead Community has provided the winter fruit and vegetable market for much of the eastern United States and has served as the center for the cultivation of avocados, Persian limes, mangoes and other tropical fruit.

The campus feasibility study concluded that the service areas of the campus should extend from 200 Street to the North to the Dade/Monroe County line to the South. The historical growth and development of this area may be attributed to several factors. First, its rich limestone

farmland attracted Henry Flagler to extend his Florida East Coast Railroad track to the area in the early 1900s, providing the initial stimulus for many families to move to the area. The real estate boom of the 1920s provided an incentive for a second wave of attraction and a third stimulus for growth occurred with the opening of the Everglades National Park in the late 1940s. The fourth wave of attraction occurred with the reopening of Homestead Air Force Base in 1953; the double laning of U.S. Highway 1 in 1958 and the turnpike extension in the 1970s provided a fifth stimulus for growth. These factors set into motion a projected pattern of growth for the 1990s. In fact, a 1980 census projected the area to grow from 90,423 persons to 106,721 in 1992. This accounts for a projected household population of 102,576 with an average household size of 2.9 persons.

A VISION OF THE FUTURE

Planned economic growth without disturbing the quality of life is the goal of a recently formed council comprised of about 60 South Dade civic, political and business leaders. The group shares a common vision of attracting a greater diversified economy to the South Dade area, especially industries in light manufacturing supportive of the agricultural base and existing service related industries designed to create jobs for residents in the community. The group has also established goals to boost the area as a major tourist destination through the acquisition of a major baseball spring training franchise and sports center and creation of convention center that serves as a focal point for South Dade civic, social and cultural activities.

This vision is supported by a need to improve the educational quality of the schools, to raise the performance level of a large segment of the underdeveloped adult population and to strengthen the linkage between business and education. The council recognizes the need for a well trained labor force in order to attract a diversified industrial base to the area.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ANALYSIS

In its preparation to meet the real needs of the community, the College plans to conduct a community needs analysis to support the basis for its educational offerings and related services. In its initial analysis of factors that will influence the enrollment of the campus, the campus feasibility study highlighted four major demographic factors: ethnic makeup, educational attainment, income and poverty, and population trends.

The population demographics of the campus service area are varied, constituting approximately 60 percent non-Hispanic white, a 20.6 percent African American distribution and a 19 percent Hispanic mixture -- mainly Mexicans, Cubans and Puerto Ricans. The educational level of the campus service area is low. The 25 years or older population group shows a high school graduation rate of only 35.96 percent and a 9.28 percent college graduation level. According to the 1980 census, the average median household income was $14,797. By 1992, that average is projected at $25,376. This compares with a much higher average in the more affluent areas of the county. As a general rule the income and educational levels increase as one moves north of 200 Street.

The highest levels of poverty and undereducational achievement are concentrated most highly within the minority and low income white groups that tend to reside west of Krome Avenue in Homestead and Florida City and along the U.S. 1 highway corridor, mainly in Naranja, Goulds, West Perrine and Modella. The vast open land areas of the service district are experiencing the largest planned unit development in South Florida. The Villages of Homestead is a planned community located east of U.S. 1 with more than 14,000 planned units that are projected to attract more than 35,000 residents, the majority of whom will be middle income households aspiring to educational excellence and a high quality life style. Moreover, the expanding Redlands community in the northwest section of the unincorporated area is attracting upper middle income level households with similar middle class expectations.

Similarly, the Homestead Air Force base is an integral part of the campus service area. The base has an approximate population of 4,000 military personnel, 10,000 dependents and 1,100 civilian personnel. The educational level of the base personnel is significantly higher than the surrounding area. The College will continue to maintain the base as a special outreach education center.

Campus programs and services must be designed to meet the needs of this diverse community profile. There are certain assumptions that should be considered in the development of a rationale planning process. These assumptions should become the basis for a planning philosophy, based on a knowledge of practices, experience, and/or deliberation.

ASSUMPTIONS

A college and its physical expression can be one of the most powerful and important forces in the human and physical revival of a community, both in terms of increasing the educational performance and enriching the cultural life of residents, and in terms of rebuilding and redesigning the physical environment. This should be accomplished by starting with the needs, values, interests and expectations of the community and building upon them. There is significance in creating college programs that build upon the realities of a community such as Homestead. The community recognizes the need to retain a rich cultural heritage based upon the values and traditions of a small town. The attraction of cultural facilities such as theater, music, art, films, and sporting events is highly desirable. Since these are needs of the community and since the college would be there to help fill community needs, a clear sense of cooperation and joint planning is evident.

The civic, political and business leadership of the Homestead community have developed a strong sense of local responsibility through the cohesive networking relationships of the various interest groups of the community. The leadership of the community understands what can happen when a community college campus is located in the heart of its downtown area. The campus could serve as a focal point for educational, cultural and social events designed to create a climate of togetherness. In order to bring this about, input by residents must be part of the initial planning process.

Another assumption that flows from the idea of tying the college and the local community together is that there should be no separation between knowledge and action. There must be a clear correlation between knowledge

taught in the classroom and the experiences required to transition students into the real world. The planned programs should be action-oriented and related to individual and community needs. Some colleges are not organized in a way that make actions possible. If what is studied and how it is studied are to have some direct effect on and meaningful relationship to what goes on in the community, then the college campus must have a mission and a structure quite d fferent from the traditional college campus.

A further assumption is that the people of the community must have access to the college. The entire campus climate including its programs, services, personnel and facilities must serve as a magnet to attract students and make them feel a part of the teaching/learning environment as well as part of the cultural life of the campus. The campus must attract high school students, potential adult learners, business and industry personnel and the varied income and ethnic mix in order to create a dynamic community where the highest quality of life is realized.

The idea of an urban mix is a mixture within a defined space comprising a wide cross section of life. There are businesses, housing, recreation space, restaurants, entertainment places, art galleries, theaters -- all operating together to form a way of life. People should be able to move easily from one set of activities to another, from home to work, to play, to school and back home. A college campus, therefore, should be part of this mix. This means something more than simply building a traditional college campus structure. There should be no arbitrary separation from the other aspects of the local life, no singling out of a structure, which is viewed as separate and forbidding because it is obviously stamped by its architecture as "a college campus."

This leads directly to another necessary principle -- joint use occupancy. The leadership of the community has expressed a need to work with the college in a joint community use of educational facilities, such as physical education, recreation, performing and visual arts spaces. The idea of urban mix and joint occupancy offers a further possibility, and a more important one. If the college is to add to the community, and not subtract from it, and if it can be threaded through the community and mixed with other kinds of buildings, then it is necessary for the planning of facilities to make use of a large range of options at any given moment.

Finally, the faculty and staff that are selected to teach, administer, and provide supportive services must be screened in terms of their ability to create and maintain a climate of excellence, creativity, flexibility, caring and total commitment to the teaching/learning values and expectations at Miami-Dade Community College. In addition, faculty and staff should be committed to the use of educational and computerized instruction and be willing to work with community agencies and organizations. The faculty and staff must also reflect the ethnic diversity and talents of the community.

PROGRAM PLANNING

The planning of the campus, then, must involve all of the community elements in order to come up with solutions that establish the desired outcom .

The first step toward such a campus and such a mutual planning process is the establishment of an internal team of consulting faculty members who are knowledgeable leaders in the respective teaching disciplines that will be offered. Similarly, a citizens advisory

committee composed of a cross section of interests from the community should also be formed to provide input.

Analysis from the community needs assessment study should provide the basis for planning and decision-making regarding the nature of programs and services to be offered. The campus is intended to offer a comprehensive array of programs and services for planning purposes. Programs and services will be organized around seven major program core concepts. They are academic support, pre-collegiate skills development, general educational development, professional development, technical development, administrative support, and learning resources.

Academic Support In order to assist students to make a smooth transition into the college and to be successful completers in their career objectives, a core of academic support programs and services will be provided in the areas of recruitment, admission, registration, basic skills assessment, advisement and counseling, financial aid assistance, career assessment and planning, job placement, community activities, and specialized support programs for retention and CLAST preparation.

Space organization and utilization for these areas should provide for a highly personalized service-centered climate where students are not treated in an assembly line approach where there is a tendency to separate the service provider from service seekers through the use of physical barriers such as service windows. Moreover, service programs should be organized in a manner that will reduce the referral of students from one area to another in order to obtain essential information and services. The overall intent of space configuration should facilitate an easy flow of communication between work units as well as between service seekers and

providers. The ultimate goal is to provide for a more student or customer friendly atmosphere.

Precollegiate Skills Development Even though a student is admitted, it will not be presumed that he or she is equipped to handle everything the curriculum contains. Bright students, or adults who have dropped out of high school and even students who have graduated are probably not equipped enough in the basic information skills of computation, reading, writing, speaking or critical thinking to handle a complicated curriculum, no matter how different that curriculum may be. The precollegiate skills development core will also contain a component for second language students who will be immersed in the speaking and writing of proper English. The core will also provide for GED preparation and literacy development. Each basic skills core will be organizationally integrated into the related discipline. For example, basic mathematics skills development will be part of the regular mathematics departmental organization. The rationale for this organizational decision is to allow for the mathematics faculty as a team to be responsible and accountable for the total design of the mathematics curriculum and for the teaching of students at each end of the mathematics skills spectrum. The same organizational configuration should apply to the curriculum design and teaching of the communication skills which should be the responsibility of those in the communication department. The primary focus of instruction in these areas should include a synthesis of presentation, practice, performance and immediate corrective feedback to the learners.

The implications of space design and organization in these areas are the following: (1) the use of computerized instructional technology should provide for a maximization of practice, time on task and immediate

feedback to the learner to increase the level of quality performance; (2) an opportunity for students to move at their own learning rate and style with maximum guidance and supervision from the faculty; (3) the use of small group instruction to diagnose learning deficiencies and provide corrective feedback as needed. Within this context, classroom and laboratory spaces for skills development should be closely integrated in order to provide for a positive teaching/learning climate to occur. Emphasis on the traditional chalkboard and lecture approach to teaching/learning should be minimized in this new frontier in education.

General Education Development As students exit successfully from the pre-collegiate skills development area or as they enter prepared to mainstream into the larger college curriculum, they are required to have a basic foundation in the general education and distribution core courses. The general education core is intended to provide each student with an opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes designed to prepare for a more rounded individual, equipped to function within an information based and highly technical society. The basic tenets of this liberal education should relate the more formal study of conventional subjects such as the social sciences, humanities and natural sciences to the basic social, economic, environmental, cultural and scientific problems of the society. The subject matter in these areas should grow out of the major issues confronting our local, national and international societies.

Within this context an inquiry and research approach to the study and resolution of problems should form the basis for teaching/learning content and methodology. The community should become a laboratory for teaching/learning. Students should be motivated to inquire, analyze,

compare, interpret and seek alternative solutions to problems. Instruction should therefore encourage the maximum use of the information skills: writing, computation, speaking, critical thinking and group participation in the research of key social, scientific, environmental, economic and culturally related issues.

The space implications for teaching/learning in these areas will require flexible multi-purpose rooms as well as specialized classroom and laboratories in order to develop the skills of observing, measuring, comparing, analyzing, synthesizing and developing models for decision making for critical issues facing the individual and the larger society.

The campus will try as much as possible to tie its physical education events and activities into existing community facilities. It will also attempt to minimize competitive sports and place greater emphasis upon health and physical fitness programs, which will encourage family participation.

The general education core will, thus, serve as the glue for the entire curriculum. It will form the foundation for students to pursue careers in the professional and technical areas.

Professional Development This component of the college's curriculum is devoted to preparing students to become knowledgeable and skilled in a particular professional area. The professional areas of concentration will be offered in a professional academic program leading towards the Associate in Arts degree. They will include professional careers related to medicine, law, education, business management and commerce, preforming and visual arts, health related professions, public administration, engineering and others. These areas will be tied to the academic transfer function of the college in order to prepare students to

make a smooth transition to the upper division colleges and universities both within the public and private sectors of higher education.

The college will need to develop a strong linkage to these professional areas in order to help students gain internship experiences and to relate classroom instruction to the real world.

Space provision will be made in accordance with the program of study. Again, there should be a strong tie of knowledge with action. Programs and courses that require specialized laboratories will be designed for multiple use by other related disciplines. The college cannot afford to build high cost computer laboratories to service separate programs, such as computerized accounting laboratories for accounting students only. There will be a need for an office to coordinate computer laboratory utilization with each of the disciplines that require this type of educational technology. Individuals seeking the Associate of Science degree to prepare for job entry will require a different type of organizational and space configuration. The campus intends to offer a 60:40 ratio mix of vocational technical programs with those of a non-vocational nature. The highest ratio being those in the technical core.

Technical Development This component of the college's curriculum is intended to prepare students who choose to pursue careers in technical areas that do not require a four year-degree. The emphasis will be on the educational development of technicians, and mid-management workers in service related and manufacturing industries. Programs in these areas will be offered in a credit and non-credit mode. The various vocational technical options will be offered in the following areas: (1) Associate in Science degree programs, (2) college credit certificate programs, (3)

specialized training opportunities, (4) intermediate training awards, (5) specialized educational opportunities, (6) vocational certificate programs. Some of these programs may be defined as postsecondary adult vocational and offered in a non-credit occupational mode.

The Homestead campus intends to offer some of the major core programs that are offered at other Miami-Dade campuses. It also intends to offer programs and courses that are unique to the Homestead area.

The continuing education and life long learning program components will be intricately tied into the professional and technical development cores. Emphasis upon integration of faculty is intended to maximize the cost of campus operations. Within this context the administrative support core will act to plan, implement and facilitate in order to ensure the smooth delivery of instruction and services to the classroom unit.

Administrative The administrative core will be based upon a participatory model, but will take full responsibility for the administration of programs and services designed to improve teaching and learning.

The support services of resource development and management, campus services, facilities management, public and community relations will be the major responsibility of this organizational unit.

The emphasis in this area will be a strong cooperative relationship with the teaching faculty, classified staff and other support units of the campus.

In order to facilitate and maximize communication between the various campus units, spaces in close proximity with the faculty and other campus units will be needed. This will be necessary in order to encourage the shared use of resources such as word processing, duplicating, clerical and

staff development that will be required to maximize support for the classroom unit.

Learning Resources Learning resources must be both accessible and attractive to students and the community. A library chiefly containing paperbacks volumes will give greater access to a larger number of people than a conventional library. Sidewalks and streets become a part of the library, with newsstands, book racks, and poster displays. A large, sky-lit main floor would suggest a book fair as well as a storehouse atmosphere demonstrating that a library can symbolize both action and knowledge.

The college library must also serve as a laboratory for the faculty to encourage students to read, research and inquire. The main library functions should be at the street level with close ties to the existing nearby public library where a shared arrangement could be worked out. A part of the library should be removed from close contact with the public -- a computer data bank, audiovisual equipment, rare hard bound volumes and expensive research materials reserved for the faculty. Meeting rooms, lecture space and quiet reading areas should be provided for college and community use.

Finally, the campus site development should plan space for large cultural events, such as fairs, concerts, community gatherings designed to provide a spirit of community togetherness, emphasizing the rich cultural tradition of the people of the area. The natural vegetation of the area should be preserved as much as possible. The outdoor court concept with tables, chairs, and umbrellas, scattered along a court yard area could produce the look of a sidewalk cafe where people could congregate, drink coffee and chat.

Small concessions stands by local vendors and merchants should be encouraged. This planning concept provides excitement for the emergence of a new frontier in education.

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